



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Brasstown Ranger
District

P. O. Box 9
Blairsville GA 30512
(706) 745-6928

File Code: 1920/2600

Date: March 2, 2006

Dear Forest User:

The Brasstown and Toccoa Ranger Districts are seeking public comments on 5 proposed projects to enhance stream habitat conditions in Union, Fannin, and Lumpkin Counties, Georgia. The projects are designed to enhance habitat for the brook trout, which is Georgia's only native trout species. The present range of brook trout in Georgia has been significantly reduced from historical levels due to a variety of factors, including historic land use practices and the introduction of nonnative rainbow and brown trout. This is part of an ongoing cooperative effort between the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Chattahoochee National Forest, and other partners to protect and enhance Georgia's brook trout populations.

The brook trout streams on the Brasstown and Toccoa Ranger Districts proposed for habitat improvement are Little Rock Creek in the Toccoa River watershed, and Bryant Creek, Pretty Branch, and Burnett Creek in the Coopers Creek watershed. Waters Creek, a trophy trout stream containing rainbow, brown, and brook trout in the Chestatee River watershed also is proposed for habitat improvement work. The proposed work will occur within an approximately ½ mile stretch of each stream. The locations of these projects are shown on the attached map.

The purpose of the project is to enhance stream habitat conditions for brook trout and other aquatic species which will move these areas toward the desired conditions in the Forest Plan. All of the stream segments proposed for work are low gradient, with limited cover and pool habitat. The proposed stream habitat improvement work is designed to improve habitat conditions by deepening pools, constricting the channel to flush sediments, providing cover, and stabilizing stream banks to prevent further erosion. The project will address several Forest Plan goals and objectives including the restoration and maintenance of aquatic ecosystems for all native and desired nonnative species of aquatic flora and fauna (Goal 26) and specifically the restoration of brook trout on the Forest (Objective 26.4).

The work is a partnership effort between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Trout Unlimited (TU), North Georgia Trout Online (NGTO), and the Chattahoochee National Forest. Funding to accomplish brook trout restoration work across the Forest, including much of the work proposed here has been requested from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Volunteers with TU and NGTO will assist in the installation of these structures.

The stream habitat enhancement will involve the maintenance of existing stream structures and the construction of new stream habitat improvement structures. The structures will be installed with hand labor. The logs used to construct the structures will be obtained from nearby trees. In many cases, recently blown over trees are available near these streams and will be utilized. Stream bank trees will not be cut. This work would occur in 2006 and 2007.

All Best Management Practices (BMP's) and Forest Plan Standards will be followed. Any



stream bank disturbance would be mitigated by seeding with native plants or non-persistent non-native species, and mulching any exposed soils that result from the proposed activities.

We are currently in the process of determining the significant environmental issues and public concerns. You can help us in completing our analysis by providing comments on this proposal as we have described it. Your comments should be as specific as possible and contain the following information: your name and address, the project name (Central Zone Stream Improvement Projects), and specific facts or comments along with the supporting reasons you believe your comments should be considered by the Deciding Official in reaching a decision. You may respond to the Brasstown Ranger District office at the address below:

Jim Wentworth
U.S. Forest Service
P.O. Box 9
Blairsville, GA 30514

You may also provide your comments by fax at (706) 745-7494 (Brasstown R.D.), or e-mail your comments to jwentworth@fs.fed.us. If you have any questions about this project please direct them to Jim Wentworth on the Brasstown District. To have your comments considered in our planning process we need to receive your reply by April 7, 2006.

Thank you for your time and interest in the management activities on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Alan Polk
ALAN POLK
DISTRICT RANGER

Attachments: Project Area Map